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UNCLAS AMMAN 003303

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ANOTHER GROUP OF ANTI-U.S. PLOTTERS ON TRIAL;
JUDGE CONTEMPLATES VERDICT IN RIYATI, ABU SAYYAF CASES

REF: A. AMMAN 2633

[1](#)B. AMMAN 1870

[1](#)C. AMMAN 3288

[1](#)1. (U) Jordan's state security court in late March initiated another trial against men suspected of planning attacks on U.S. and Israeli targets in Jordan. Authorities charged three men from the "Obedience and Compliance" group with possessing illegal weapons and ammunition with illicit intent. A fourth is being tried in absentia. The prosecution alleged that the suspects met in a Zarqa mosque to plot, but were arrested before they carried out any armed attacks. Two prosecution witnesses told the court on April 14 that the defendants had asked several religious scholars for a fatwa sanctioning attacks on Americans and Jews.

[1](#)2. (U) Meanwhile, the court moved forward on two other high-profile cases. The defense for al-Qa'ida/Ansar al-Islam suspect Ahmad al-Riyati concluded its presentation on April 25 with a call to dismiss all charges against his client. Riyati and eight others being tried in absentia (including Abu Musab al-Zarqawi) are accused of plotting attacks against local and U.S. targets in Jordan last year. The judge adjourned the session indefinitely to consider his verdict in the case. The judge also is contemplating his verdict in the case of Jordanian extremist Mohammad al-Shalabi (aka Abu Sayyaf) and 12 other men (including three Saudis being tried in absentia) accused of planning anti-U.S. operations.

[1](#)3. (U) Comment: Given Jordanians' renewed focus on security after revelations about the recent bombing plot in Jordan, the court's proceedings against suspected terrorists will come under increasing scrutiny in coming months. However, defense attorneys will find little sympathy for their clients' plight -- or repeated claims of torture -- among a frightened public, which may be more inclined now to allow the authorities latitude in dealing with suspected terrorists. We expect the court to hand down convictions and harsh punishments against the suspects as the GOJ seeks to make an example of subversives.

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